

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about H1N1 Flu: Higher Education

What is novel H1N1?

H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease, similar to the regular seasonal flu. It appears to be spreading fast in younger people, specifically 10-24 year olds. The severity of the disease varies from very mild symptoms to severe illness that could result in death.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1?

Signs of flu include having two or more of these symptoms: fever, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and cough, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue.

What steps can students and staff take to stay healthy?

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, especially if coughing or sneezing. Using alcohol-based cleaners is also helpful.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette. Cover mouth and nose with a tissue. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into an elbow or shoulder, not into hands.
- Encourage sick people to stay home and self isolate.
- Encourage students and staff to get vaccinated against seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu. It is recommended that students and staff most at risk for complications, including pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions, get the H1N1 vaccine.

What should students and staff do if they notice someone with flu-like illness?

- Ask students and staff to keep a six-foot distance from those who are sick.
- Encourage students and staff to return home and away from others until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Encourage students and staff to talk to their healthcare provider about appropriate treatment and actions to take if symptoms are severe.

Will schools be closed to slow the spread of H1N1?

Currently, school closure is not normally recommended. If a large number of flu-like illnesses occur, schools should consult with state and local health officials about an appropriate response.

What should be done with residents of campus housing who become ill?

- Ask that sick residents remain in their own room and limit close contact with others. It is suggested that residents try to receive care from only one person.
- If residents are unable to avoid close contact, encourage them to use a loose-fitting surgical mask to cover their mouth, or if no mask is available, a tissue or other covering is appropriate.
- Encourage residents to clean commonly touched surfaces, including desks, computers and cell phones.
- To prevent the spread of illness, encourage residents living close to home of origin to return home.

- Consider providing those residents unable to leave campus and living in shared rooms with temporary, alternative housing.

When can students and staff return to classes?

- Students and staff are encouraged not to return to class until 24 hours after they no longer suffer from a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit) or signs of fever. Signs of fever must pass without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

What additional cleaning should be done?

- It is important to continue regular cleaning schedules. Disinfecting items that are already cleaned is not recommended.

What should schools tell parents?

- Encourage parents that live relatively close to the campus to bring their child home if they become sick. Ask them to provide private transportation to the student, if possible.
- Advise parents to encourage their children to use good judgment and take standard precautions against getting the flu.
- Advise parents to continue to monitor institution mailings, emails, and website for any flu-related updates.

What are suggested methods to communicate to students about flu?

- Utilize social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter or Digg.
- Send out important messages via text or email.
- Encourage staff and teachers to download their own flu fact sheets and posters to share with students or display in classrooms.
- Post fact sheets and posters in common areas, such as student unions, libraries, dorms, and restrooms.

Additional Resources

Twitter: Flu symptom update

<http://bit.ly/hvsaS>

Template letter/email to students and parents:

www.flu.gov/plan/school/higheredtoolkit.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Social media tools

<http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/H1N1/>

Department of Education: Higher Education Emergency Planning

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/more.html>

Pandemic Flu: Higher Education Checklists

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/collegeschecklist.html#1>

For more information on Higher Education Institutions and H1N1, call the City of Milwaukee Health Department at 414-286-3521.